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TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson No. 40

BUILDERS OF THE ADYTUM

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Lesson Forty

THE MOON

Key 18's title, The Moon, is a direct reference to subconsciousness and its powers of duplication, reflection, reproduction, and the turning of energy back to its source. In its deeper meaning, the Key therefore symbolizes the Path of Return.

An ancient esoteric maxim is plainly indicated by the symbols of this Key. "First the stone, then the plant, then the animal, then the man." At the lower end of the path, at the margin of the pool, are several stones. Just beyond them are pointed leaves of a water-plant, looking like arrows, and thus suggesting aim and aspiration. The vegetation continues also into the field beyond. Climbing onto the field is a relatively low form of animal life, a crustacean, and a little farther along are a dog and a wolf. Then come towers, human structures, but the path continues beyond them.

The pool below is the same as that of Keys 14 and 17. It is the great deep of cosmic mind-stuff out of which emerges the dry land of physical manifestation. From it all form, inorganic as well as organic, proceeds.

The crayfish is a crustacean, hard-shelled. Note that its shape is similar to that of a scorpion. This semblance is one of the reasons for selecting this particular creature as a symbol. That which rises and animates the whole journey along the Path of Return is the force of the sign Scorpio, as we have seen throughout these lessons. The crayfish represents also, on the negative side, selfishness, crabbedness, obstinacy; but on the positive side it is a type of purpose, determination and pertinacity. On account of its shell, this animal typifies also the early stages of unfoldment wherein the student still thinks of himself as being separated from the rest of nature, and from Spirit.

The dog and the wolf belong to the same genus, the canine family. The wild dangerous wolf is what nature produces, apart from human interference and adaptation. The dog is the result of modifications effected in wolves by human thought and action.

Men tame wolves and modify their bodies and their natures by cross-breeding and training. Thus this detail in the symbolism alludes to control of the body-consciousness, and to development of specific patterns formulated by human intelligence. The wolf, therefore, is a symbol of Nature, and the dog a symbol of Art.

The path arises between these extremes. For it is the way of balance, the way or method which goes neither too far toward artificiality nor toward the error that everything should be left to the unchecked impulses of nature.

The path ascends over undulating ground, a succession of ascents and descents. Advance along the Path of Return is not an unbroken upward climb. As we traverse it, we reach one eminence after another, and after surmounting some lesser peak, we seem to go downhill for a time.

We cannot always be climbing. In the Great Work there is periodicity and alternation of activities. It is a work of the Moon, as well as a work of the Sun. In this operation there must be waning as well as waxing, reflux as well as flux, rest as well as endeavor. Assimilation, or taking in, must be balanced by expression, or giving out. Periods of intense effort must alternate with periods of relaxation. A bow always drawn never speeds the arrow to its mark.

Since the path rises over rolling terrain, as one advances there comes a time when the lowest point of descent is at a higher level than the peak of a previous attainment. The lesson of this symbol is of great importance to occult students. To all of us there come times when we cannot climb, and if we do not understand the law here represented, we may become discouraged. The one thing needful is to keep facing toward the goal.

The towers are the work of man. They have battlements, and form a gateway. The suggestion of the design is that each tower is part of a wall, not shown in the picture. This is truer to the original form of the symbolism than those versions which show two towers, each standing by itself. The occult interpretation we have received is that the wall of which the towers form a part signifies the ordinary limits of human sensation and perception. Yet this wall, or veil if you prefer, is not a final boundary. A vast region of experience extends beyond it. Many have entered that region and their footsteps have marked a path whereby we may follow them.

Note also, that the space between the towers forms a gateway to the beyond. This harks back to the basic symbolism of Daleth, the door, and thus to the Empress. The detail is important because we are told by astrologers that Venus is exalted in Pisces, the sign which corresponds to Key 18. Moreover, we shall nave no difficulty in understanding that creative imagination is truly the open portal to what lies beyond the field of ordinary sensation and perception.

The moon is drawn so that it has sixteen principal and sixteen secondary rays, though in the picture some of the secondary rays at the top of the design are not clearly shown. Thus there are thirty-two rays. This number 32 is, first of all, the number of paths on the Qabalistic diagram of the Tree of Life. Thus these 32 paths represented on the Tree are composed of the ten forces corresponding to the numbers from 1 to 10, and the twenty-two forces represented by the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the Tarot keys. Hence the rays of the moon show the sum-total of cosmic forces at work in the field of human personality.

32 is also the number of the Hebrew noun לב, "laib", meaning the heart (in all senses, especially as the seat of knowledge, understanding, and thinking); also meaning midst or center. In this connection, remember the quotation from Eliphas Levi, in SEVEN STEPS, Lesson 1, which identifies the heart of man with the sympathetic nervous system.

The Hebrew word for moon is לבנה, "lebanah" or "levanah". Its first two letters spell לב, "laib", or heart. The second two spell בן, "ben", meaning son. The last two spell נה, "nah", meaning ornament, beautification. The first three letters spell לבן, "laban", meaning white. The last three spell בנה, "bawnaw", or to build, to make, to erect.

This esoteric analysis of the word לבנה, according to accepted methods of Qabalists, suggests: 1. that in the heart of the Son (man) are to be found the sources of beauty; 2. that in the aspect of the Life-power identified in yoga and alchemy as the "white work" of the Moon, is concealed the real secret of building the mystic temple of regenerated humanity.

Eighteen Yods fall from the moon onto the path. In the colored Keys they are partly red and partly yellow to intimate the combination of solar energy (yellow) with the vital force in the blood (red).

In some versions of Tarot, these Yods are replaced by drops of blood indicating the same underlying idea which is that the powers of subconsciousness are developed as actual physical structures through changes in the chemical constitution of the blood. The body is built from elements contained in the blood stream, and the chemistry of the blood is controlled by subconsciousness, the moon in Key 18.

The Way of Attainment is the Path of Return. The Beyond is really the Source. What is before us in the future is what is also behind us in the past. This is one meaning of the saying: "The last shall be first, and the first shall be last." When the cycle of evolution is completed, end and beginning are one.

The height to which the path leads is that whereon stands the Hermit of Key 9. Ancient teachers have left clear descriptions of this Way. They say it is narrow, meaning that concentration is required from those who follow it. It is a mode of life balanced between the conditions of nature and such modifications of those conditions as are possible to art. It is the Middle Way.

The beginning of the Way is in the realm of the familiar, of the commonplace. The path leads, by easy stages, from the known to the less-known, and from the less-known to the unknown. Every great Master of life has followed this path to its goal. The path itself is one of physiological reorganization. The goal is true Self-recognition, correct perception of the universal I AM, and mental identification with that One Reality.

Thus, on the Cube of Space, the line corresponding to Qoph and Key 18 is the line at the bottom of the southern face, South-Below, which connects the lower end of the line South-West to the lower end of the line South-East. The current in this line South-Below moves from West to East, that is, from appearances to causes.

This line receives no influence from the line South-West because in the latter line the current of energy moves upward. The line does receive a stream of influence from the line West-Below, corresponding to Ayin, to Key 15, and to the sign of Capricorn.

This line South-Below is that of the sign of Pisces, the twelfth and last sign of the zodiac. Pisces is ruled by Jupiter (corresponding to West) and in this sign Venus (corresponding to East) is said to be exalted.

In this connection, note that the line runs from West to East, and, at the South-East corner, communicates its influence to the line South-East, corresponding to Key 5. Mental identification with the One Reality is precisely what is symbolized by Key 5, and this identification results from the reorganization symbolized by Key 18. As a further confirmation of the attribution of Key 18 to Pisces, remember that Pisces rules the feet, and that this is suggested by the path, or track, left by the many travelers who have traversed it.

This week, begin the practice of reviewing your day's activities just before going to sleep. Record your gains, and **your failures**, in your occult diary. Your attainments are steps in your progress toward Self-realization. Your failures warn you what to avoid in the future.

Never muse long on your failures. Remember that "sin" is nothing but "missing the mark". Do not worry. Worry is concentration on the negative appearances of life. If you are given to worry, then you possess plenty of ability to concentrate. Change the polarity of your thought and emotion. Before you fall asleep, impress the subconscious with the most positive images you can fashion. Persist in this practice. You will sow seeds which subconsciousness will build into a new and better bodily structure.

EMBODIED IN MY FLESH

Understand Key 18 aright, and you will clear your mental house of a lot of rubbishy notions about spirituality. Be spiritual by all means; but if you would accomplish the Great Work and live as a truly spiritual being while yet in the flesh, keep your feet on the ground.

True spirituality cannot be expressed by a fanatic. It doesn't matter what form the fanaticism may take. Exclusive adherence to some particular type of religious creed is no better and no worse than like rigidity of mind in expressing itself in uncompromising atheism. Intemperate, intolerant condemnation of another's personal habits will keep you from unfolding true spirituality, just as certainly as will intemperance in eating and drinking.

The Lord Buddha summed up the best attitude to hold when he counselled his followers to take the middle-of-the road course. The same thought is in the Qabalistic doctrine of the straight road up the Middle Pillar of the Tree of Life. This also, is the real significance of what Jesus had to say about a "strait and narrow way". It is the way of equilibrium, sharp as the razor's edge over which Moslems believe they must pass to Paradise. The paradox is that no strait-laced, narrow person can follow it because such persons are invariably extremists.

On the lunatic fringe of occultism (and, sometimes, it seems to be a rather wide fringe), one meets faddists of every type. By far the greater number are persons who seek to become spiritual by making themselves physically miserable. They torture themselves with postures, or with trick breathings. They starve their bodies with silly diets, making gods of their bellies, and serving their gods with fear and trembling.

Some of the most benighted of these are those who profess to follow the Way of the Masters of Compassion. They talk by the hour of human brotherhood. They rant about service to mankind. Yet they look down their noses at anybody who enjoys a hearty meal, and they show precious little compassion toward men and women who presume to hold opinions other than theirs.

You can't be compassionate if you turn yourself into a freak or a faddist. Behind such behavior is just plain egotism, as truly as it is behind most other kinds of silly behavior. Your body is just about the same as any other person's. It requires the same average supplies of light, water, air and food. What is good for most people is good for you. Yes, you may be "allergic" to this or that, but if you act on the assumption that your body will take care of the raw materials you supply it, and use intelligence in providing right materials in sufficient quantities, your subconsciousness will live up to your expectations and will give you a good physical instrument.

Here on earth is where we have to do the work mentioned in these lessons. Some of the consequences of our practice will give us better knowledge of planes beyond the physical—of the "beyond", shown in Key 18, the region traversed by the path after the two towers have been left behind. Yet our main business is to bring the physical body into the best possible attunement, and in order to do this, we must realize that the Kingdom of Spirit is **right now** actually embodied in our flesh.

Every human being, whether he knows it or not, is an incarnation of the Kingdom of God. They who really do know this are able to effect wonderful results. They who are, as yet, ignorant of this truth are, nevertheless, just as truly incarnations of the Kingdom. Their want of knowledge, however, prevents them from taking full advantage of this tremendous truth. Thus they appear to be slaves, rather than masters.

We do not become spiritual beings. There is no way to become more spiritual than we are right now. The Path is not a method of acquiring powers. It is the Way of Return to the **consciousness** of what we really are. It is the Way, also, of progressively developing skill in the exercise of our powers.

Built and maintained by subconsciousness, the physical organism is the reflection and embodiment of our habitual mental states. If we think of the body as being a thing instead of understanding it to be a community of federated cells, each responsive to the influence of our confident expectation that it will do its appointed work smoothly and efficiently, we manufacture, at great pains, our own ill-health.

If we think the body is material, and inhabited by an elusive something we call our "soul", or, perhaps, our "mind", we are grossly mistaken. "Matter", it cannot be said too often, is the way the energy of the One Spirit manifests itself within the range of our senses. Every cell of our bodies is truly Pure Spirit. Every cell is a center of consciousness. We permeate our physical bodies, and our "soul" or "mind" is not located anywhere in some particular organ. Truly the body is the temple of God, and the only God there is in the universe is the spiritual essence of humanity, and of every single person dwelling here on earth, or anywhere else in the universe.

The life-essentials, food, air and water, are spiritual also. Physically, all three are specializations of light. To eat, to drink, to breathe—these are the fundamental requirements for literal and actual illumination. Therefore we find breath control in all systems of spiritual exercise. Therefore we find bathing transformed into the ceremony of baptism. Therefore all great rituals of religion and of occultism make such simple actions as eating and drinking the central "mysteries" of their ceremonies.

When you become fully aware that you eat and drink Pure Spirit, that you breathe Pure Spirit, that the fire of Pure Spirit shines upon you from the sun, and glows even in a prosaic radiator or stove, you will find your everyday existence one continuous miracle. For the difference between an adept and an ordinary person is that an adept knows what he is, and acts as if he really were what he knows himself to be.

It takes persistent, steady practice to establish one's self in such knowledge. Yet the practice itself is simple. Over and over again, hour after hour, day after day, **remind yourself**. Not by set affirmations. A far better way is to bring to your recollection the truth that your body and everything in its environment is **Pure Spirit under whatever form it may present itself to your senses**. Practice this way, and you'll come wide awake! Nor will you run the risk of forming futile habits of vain verbal repetition.

Not alone in sanctuaries set apart,
But in the street and market-place,
In the abode of sin
As well as in the house of prayer,
Mayest thou say with thy Father Jacob,
"Surely the Lord is in this place;
And I knew it not."

Verily, thy consciousness of body
Is my self-knowledge of form,
And by that knowledge working in thee
Do I maintain thine existence
In all states and conditions.

Behold, I dwell with thee, O Israel
And thou dwellest with me.
Take heed
That thou despise not thy Lord in human form.

From the BOOK OF TOKENS
by Dr. Paul Foster Case